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PREHISTORIC MAN IN MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN

By HENRY MONTGOMERY

In July, August, and September of 1907 the writer conducted archeological excavations and other explorations in the Canadian Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. A large part of this work consisted of the examination and excavation of prehistoric tumuli scattered over the plains, and which were traced for a distance of more than one hundred and fifty miles north of the international boundary. Some of these mounds are circular; others are elongate in form. They vary from 3 to 8 feet in height, and from 20 to 90 feet in diameter. Nine of the twelve mounds fully explored were made of black prairie soil; the remaining three consisted about equally of glacial bowlders and earth. The bowlders varied from 10 inches to 2 feet in thickness. The presence of the bowlders made the work of excavation tedious and difficult; sometimes also the stones crushed into fragments the underlying specimens, which otherwise could have been saved unbroken. Most of the mounds contained human bones along with objects of human workmanship, such as vessels of earthenware, shell spoons, shell beads, pipes and discs of stone, and awls and needles of bone. Many buffalo skulls, and in one mound entire skeletons of buffaloes, were found, the bones being in their natural positions. Burial pits were found in some of them. In each of two mounds as many as three burial pits occurred. There were oak trees, a foot to 15 inches in diameter, growing upon some of the tumuli. Long earthen ridges or grades also occur here. Some digging was done upon them by the writer. The longest of these ridges was found to be about two thousand feet in length.

MOUNDS IN MANITOBA

A Manitoba mound of black soil, $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height and 40 feet in diameter, contained three burial pits nearly circular in form and

about four feet distant from each other. One of these pits contained a human skeleton, a perfect earthenware urn-shaped vessel, and several river shells of the genus *Unio*. The earthenware urn (fig. 16) is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, and its diameter is $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches. It is



FIG. 16.—Earthenware urn from a burial pit in a mound at Sourisford, Manitoba.
(Height $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.)

hand-made, and is decorated by a deep spiral groove running around it and terminating at the center of the bottom. It has a bulging margin, or lip, with four small projections at equal intervals. The top of the lip is decorated with four grooves. Two of



SIDE AND BOTTOM OF POTTERY URN FROM SECOND MOUND OF FIRST GROUP, SOURISFORD,
MANITOBA. DIAMETER OF BODY, 11.5 CM. (4.5 INCHES)

these are straight and occur one upon each of two opposite sides of the mouth; the other two are zigzag in form and occupy the remaining two opposite margins. The body of this urn was painted somewhat with red paint. One *Unio* shell valve had evidently been used as a spoon. It has a short handle with three notches in it; and it has four notches in each margin. The position of the skeleton indicated that the body had been buried in a sitting or crouching position. At a little higher level in the mound and at a short distance from this pit a stone shovel was discovered. It is well polished upon both sides and upon a portion of its margin. It tapers to a rounded point much like a modern iron shovel, but it differs in being flat instead of convex and concave. Its length is $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches, its greatest width is $7\frac{1}{8}$ inches, and its greatest thickness is $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch. This shovel becomes thinner toward its edge.

The second burial pit contained an adult human skeleton and the skeleton of a child, together with two *Unio* shell scoops having handles and marginal notches, and also an urn of pottery. This urn, which is also hand-made, has a spiral groove terminating near the center of the bottom. The height of this vessel is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and its greatest width $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It is slightly smaller than the urn taken out of the burial pit first mentioned, its spiral groove is not so wide, and the vessel has a slightly different shape, more especially at its lip. It is, however, in all important respects similar to it.

The third burial pit had been previously opened by other parties, and apparently some things had been removed. By further excavation half of a small earthen urn was obtained, which has a decorative design different from those of the urns described as from the first and second burial pits. The spiral groove is entirely absent; there are vertical incised markings upon the body, and several eminences upon the outer side of the lip. Some human bones also occurred here; the remainder of the skeleton had probably been taken away by others years before.

In this vicinity another mound, 45 feet in diameter and 6 feet in height, yielded two vessels of pottery of the same general character as the first described, and differing only in minor respects. They are small urns decorated by a continuous furrow or groove running

spirally around the body and bottom to the center (pl. III). This mound also contained a couple of human skeletons, one of the skulls having a flat band of native copper around it; two straight catlinite pipes; a large tine of a deer's antler, which had been cut off with a stone implement, and various small bone, shell, and stone objects. Charred wooden poles occurred here. A circular polished stone plate or disc was found within two feet of the surface of this mound. Mounds in this locality which had been previously opened by other persons also yielded similar pottery and pipes.

On the other hand, it was found that a group of mounds from three to five miles distant, and situated beyond a creek of considerable size, yielded no pipes and no pottery. It was also observed that the latter were accompanied by many long and wide artificial earth ridges, which were perfectly straight, and some of them from 1000 to 2000 feet in length. One mound of this latter group, measuring 40 by 50 feet in diameter, contained ten human skeletons, some being of adult males and females, and some of children. As to their condition it may be stated that the skeletons were in a good state of preservation, the bones being firm and strong; yet the long-bones — the femur, humerus, tibia, fibula, ulna, and radius — of several of the skeletons were badly broken. The other bones were perfect. As the burial pit was only about 3 feet by $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in width and length, it seems probable that the limb bones were broken in the effort to place so many bodies in the pit at the time of burial. No objects of workmanship of any kind were found in this tumulus.

A second mound of the same group, 45 feet in diameter and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, yielded the broken bones of two human skeletons, a bone awl, and a few shell ornaments; and at a distance of four or five feet from these the entire skeletons of seven large buffaloes were found, all being within two to four feet from the surface. The buffalo bones were not broken, or weathered or separated. They showed no signs of having been exposed to the sun and wind before burial, and most of them were in their proper position.

In a third mound of this group, 25 feet in diameter and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, the writer found 14 heads of buffaloes and many other buffalo bones together at a depth of two to three feet, also the bones of a child and the following portions of an adult human skeleton:



PIPE AND WHISTLES

a, Catlinite pipe from a mound near Halbrite, Saskatchewan (natural size). *b, c*, Bone whistles from a mound in the second group near Sourisford, Manitoba (length 9 and 10 inches)

2 dorsal vertebræ, 1 lumbar vertebra, the left clavicle, the uppermost piece of the sternum, 2 ribs, 2 metacarpal bones, 1 incisor, and 1 canine. From another mound bone whistles (pl. IV, *b, c*), anklets (fig. 17), shell ornaments (pl. V, *b*), and other objects were procured.

Yet other mounds here yielded human bones, but few or no articles of workmanship.

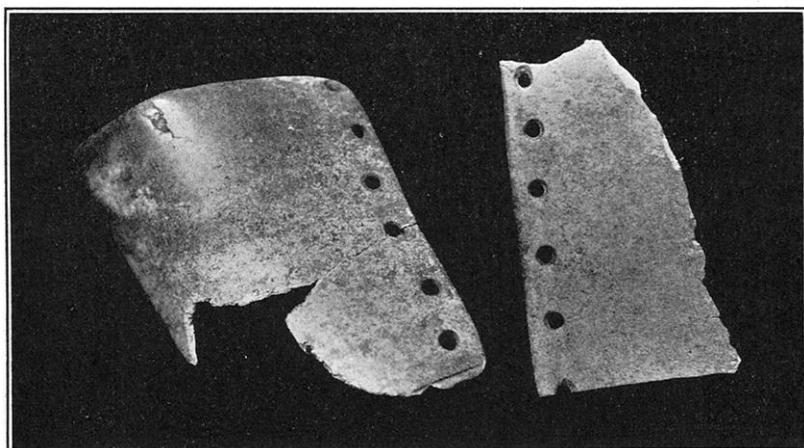


FIG. 17.—Portions of two bone anklets, with holes bored from both sides; from a mound near Sourisford, Manitoba. (Full size.)

Because of the comparative freshness of the bones, as well as for other reasons, it appears probable that this latter group of mounds is much more recent than the former, from which the pipes of catlinite and vessels of pottery were taken. Both are in the same general region near the Souris river, and only a few miles apart. But the localities seem to have had different periods of occupancy, and to have been inhabited by peoples of somewhat different customs and modes of life.

The present writer's operations upon a circular tumulus, 60 feet in diameter and 6 feet in height, situated on the Campbell beach of the ancient Lake Agassiz in northern Manitoba, yielded the remains of eight human skeletons. These were in three irregularly shaped pits, one of which extended to a depth of nine feet from the surface of the tumulus. Like the others, this latter pit was filled with black soil, and the entire mound was made of the same kind of material.

No objects of human workmanship were found in this mound. The bones in the deepest pit were greatly broken. This burial had been made by sinking the pit in the stratified sands underlying the tumulus. From a consideration of the depth and relations of the burial pits here, the character of the underlying deposits, and the condition of the skeletons, one can readily understand how a mistake may have been made in determining the geological conditions under which the so-called "Loess Man of Nebraska" was reported to have been discovered last year beneath the Gilder mound near Omaha. An artificial ridge or tumulus, 30 feet wide and 60 feet long by 4 feet high, extends northward from the circular mound. Other ridges and mounds were observed in this part of the province.

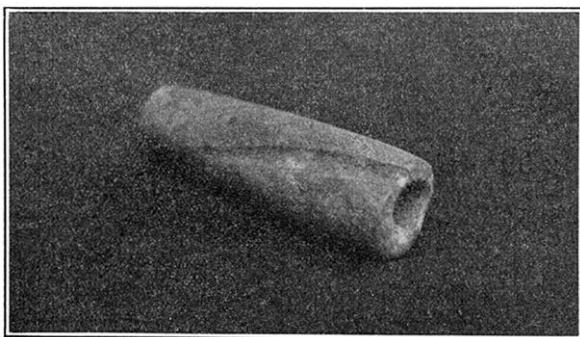
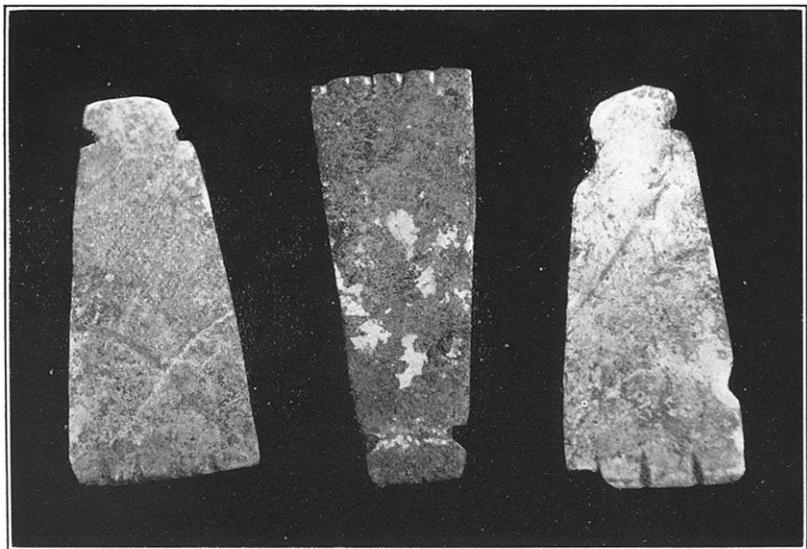


FIG. 18.—Marine shell bead from a mound on Mr Rhind's farm near Westbourne, Manitoba.

Operations upon a mound 67 feet by 97 feet in diameter, situated near White Mud river and Lake Manitoba, resulted in finding a few human bones, one large bead made from the usual marine shell (fig. 18), some small sea-shell beads (*Marginella*), and a dozen flat pearly shell pendants with similar artificial notches and markings upon them (pl. IV, *a*). There were also taken out of this mound some broken pieces of pottery, which differed much in decorative design from the pottery previously described. No burial pit was discovered here. The trunk of one of the oaks growing upon this mound was 14 inches in diameter. Two long and wide artificial ridges extend from this tumulus. The mound and ridges may be of about the same period as the second group aforementioned.



a, Shell pendants from a mound near Westbourne. (Natural size.)



b, Circular marine shell ornament from a mound in the second group, near Sourisford. Diameter 12 cm. (4¾ inches).

REMAINS IN SASKATCHEWAN

A Saskatchewan mound, constructed of earth and bowlders and situated upon a natural eminence, was about 20 feet in diameter and 5 feet in height. This contained two perfect catlinite pipes, one being 5 inches and the other $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length (pl. IV, a; fig. 19). Both are straight tubes, and they show signs of considerable use. The smaller pipe has a thick ridge or rim around it at its lower end. This mound also yielded a large bead made from the thick columella of the marine shell *Busycon*, one polished bone bead, pieces of charred wood, broken deer bones, pieces of chipped flint, a human skeleton, a piece of metallic looking substance (possibly a copper alloy), and a small bluish bead the composition of which, like that of the preceding, has not yet been determined. From this mound there extended three distinct and well defined rows of small bowlders in straight lines for a length of about 220 feet, the rows at right angles to each other and each terminating in a circular heap of stones. The rows were in the direction of west, north, and east. A few rods to the northeast of this mound were five stone circles, distant the one from the other usually about 12 or 15 feet. These stone circles were respectively 10, 15, 12, 15, and 18 feet in diameter. Each circle consisted of a single row of stones from 8 to 15 inches in thickness. Many of these circles of stones occur throughout Saskatchewan; they are probably of a later period than the mounds.

The human skeletons from all the mounds thus far explored indicate a stature of six feet or more in the adult male. The crania are dolichocephalic and mesocephalic, and in a few instances they exhibit

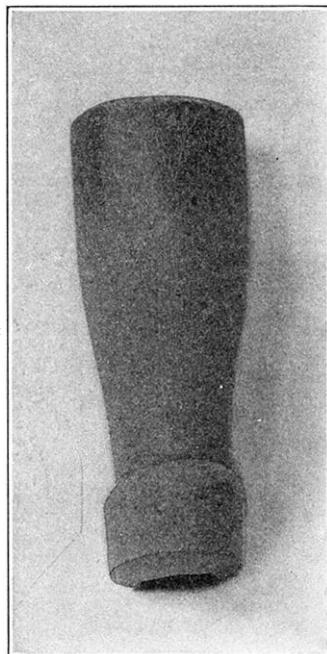


FIG. 19.—Catlinite pipe from a mound near Halbrite, Saskatchewan. (Full size.)

a low type. Further exploration and study of these aboriginal monuments may throw new light upon the culture and relations of the people whose lives and labors they represent. This is hoped and expected. I have not been able to refer them to the Mandan or to any other tribe of the Siouan stock, and much less to the Algonquian Cree or Chippewa. There is, however, sufficient known to show conclusively that they belong to a section of the Mississippi valley mound builders, differing from the works of those people chiefly in the presence of long, straight, earthen ridges, in having fewer manufactured articles, and also in the form and design of the pottery and pipes. From an examination of many of these monuments during a number of years I think I have obtained considerable evidence of the manner in which they were constructed, which will be discussed at another time. As to their date, it seems probable that the oldest of these mounds were erected several centuries before the Mandan and other Siouan movements to the plains region began.

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